

# COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Overnight Youth Camps

Updates to this guidance included clarification of requirements and recommendations for camps and a new section for [Considerations for indoor air](#).

This guidance document outlines practical prevention strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in overnight youth camp settings. This guide to overnight camping supplements the [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth and Student Programs](#) ([www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf)).

Under Gov. Tim Walz's Executive Orders, businesses that are in operation during the peacetime emergency are required to establish and implement a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan. A template for a plan is available at [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](http://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp). The COVID-19 Preparedness Plan should address the requirements in this document.

Information for adult camps can be found in the [Stay Safe Guidance for Outdoor Recreation Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/outdoor-recreation.jsp\)](http://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/outdoor-recreation.jsp) and the [Stay Safe Guidance for Entertainment \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp\)](http://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp).

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## Requirements

Wearing a face covering, along with frequent handwashing, avoiding touching the face, and practicing physical distancing, are our best tools to help prevent the spread of illness.

### Prepare before camp begins

Contact local municipalities (or county government) near the camp location to ensure they are aware of the camp's activities. Share your COVID-19 preparedness plan with them.

- Explain your plan to help mitigate transmission of COVID-19 between the local community and camp.
- Plan for access to testing if someone in the camp community needs it.

Set expectations with families for participating in the camp's program. Communication should include the camp's strategies to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 exposure in the camp environment and alternative strategies if the level of community transmission requires disruption of programming.

- If there is a surge in COVID-19 cases in the camp community or a stay-at-home order is issued while camp is in session, everyone would be sent home.
- Prepare parents to pick up their child as soon as possible if they become ill while at camp.

Review the CDC's resource for whether or not to operate the camp program: [Suggestions for Youth and Summer Camps \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html).

## Maintain group sizes

Follow social distancing guidelines in [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth and Student Programs \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf) including:

- Within the program, create and maintain groups of the same staff, volunteers, and campers, with a maximum number of 15 people for indoor activities and up to 25 people for outdoor activities. Bring kids together in a safe, socially distanced manner.
- Adapt activities to allow physical distancing of at least 6 feet.
- If social distancing is not possible with the group size, then the number of participants must be reduced.
  - For example, if a cabin can usually hold 12 people if crowded together, the same cabin may only be able to hold five people when social distancing is practiced.

## Make plans for isolating sick staff or campers

Any staff or campers who get sick should be isolated (moved away from others) immediately.

- Plan to have a cabin or area that can be used to isolate a symptomatic staff member, volunteer, or camper. Identify a bathroom or stall that could be used only by people who are sick. Ensure there is enough space for multiple people placed at least 6 feet apart if more than one participant becomes ill.
- Ensure that the sick person has hygiene supplies available, including a face covering, facial tissues, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Identify one or two staff who will bring food and hydration, and who will check on staff or campers who are sick while you wait for them to be picked up.
- Limit the number of staff who have face-to-face interactions with people who are sick.
  - Staff should wear a face covering when interacting with sick people, and thoroughly wash hands afterwards.

Follow exclusion guidance and isolate symptomatic staff and campers: [COVID-19 Decision Tree for People in Schools, Youth, and Child Care Programs \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf).

## Make plans for access to health care and testing

It is a requirement to include in the Preparedness Plan a plan for how to access health care and testing.

MDH recommends staff and campers who are ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 be separated, sent home, and referred to their health care provider for testing.

- Before camp begins, work with your local public health agency to plan for access to health care and COVID-19 testing to address situations where there may be delays in sending ill staff or campers home.
- Questions to consider asking your local public health agency include:
  - Is there adequate access to testing should a staff or camper become ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19?
  - How long will it take to receive results?
- Contact your local public health agency before using the local health care system, except in the case of an emergency.
- Have a plan for quarantining close contacts where a person has a lab-confirmed or clinically diagnosed case of COVID-19.
- Staff or campers who have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 will need to be separated and sent home for their quarantine period. Follow the plan made in advance with parents and staff for getting them home.
- If a close contact of a staff or camper from home is diagnosed with COVID-19 within 14 days of that person arriving at camp, separate the staff or camper and follow the plan made in advance to get them home.

## Adhere to face covering requirements

As of July 25, 2020, people in Minnesota are required to wear a face covering in all indoor businesses and indoor public spaces, per Executive Order 20-81. Staff and campers are required to wear face coverings over their mouth and nose when required by Executive Order 20-81. See [Executive Orders from Governor Walz \(mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp):

- In the context of overnight camp settings, the Executive Order requires staff, visitors, and campers to wear face coverings in all indoor areas.
- Staff are also required to wear face coverings outdoors when they can't social distance from others—including other staff, campers, visitors, and vendors.
- The requirement to wear a face covering does not apply to private sleeping quarters (i.e., an enclosed private room that is shared only with persons who are members of the same household).
- The Executive Order does not require children 5 years old and younger to wear face coverings and children under 2 should never wear a face covering. The Executive Order also does not require face coverings when a person is unable to tolerate wearing a face covering because of a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability.

- The Executive Order allows people to temporarily remove face coverings in certain circumstances, provided that social distancing is maintained, including:
  - When eating or drinking.
  - When swimming or participating in another activity that would get the face covering wet (a face covering should never be worn in the water or when wet).
  - When participating in an organized sport or other physical activity when the level of exertion would make it difficult to wear a face covering.
  - When communicating with a person who is deaf or hearing impaired or has a disability, medical condition, or mental health condition that makes communication with a face covering difficult.
  - When performing or public speaking, or playing an instrument that cannot be played with a face covering.
  - When staff are working alone, including when alone in an office, a room, a cubicle with walls that are higher than face level, a vehicle, or an enclosed or separated work area.
  - When sleeping or going to sleep.
- For more detailed guidance about the Executive Order’s face covering requirements, recommendations, and exemptions, refer to the following resources:
  - [Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations under Executive Order 20-81 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html)
  - [Frequently Asked Questions About the Requirement to Wear Face Coverings \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecoverfaq.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecoverfaq.html)
  - [Best Practices for Masks: Considerations for People with Disabilities and Special Health Needs \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidemasks.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidemasks.pdf)
- Train all staff how to effectively use face coverings. See [CDC: How to Wear Masks \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html).

## Establish procedures with vendors

- Establish clear procedures with vendors to mitigate interaction with the camp community.
- Staff who interact with vendors should wear a face covering and practice social distancing, and vendors should also wear a face covering.
- Allow for curbside drop-off and pick-up of services whenever possible.

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## Recommendations for housing

- Reduce the number of participants staying in cabins to allow for campers and staff to spread out.
  - Maintain the same cabin groups (pods) of the same staff and campers of 10 people or fewer.
  - Staff-only cabins need to follow the same guidelines of 10 people or fewer.
- Ideally, participants should maintain 6 feet of social distancing while in cabins.

- Have a designated area to keep personal belongings of campers and staff separate from each other's belongings.
- Consider head-to-toe sleeping arrangements.
- MDH does not recommend wearing face coverings while sleeping.
- Clean high-use surfaces daily.
- Limit cabin access only to people who reside in that cabin.
- Camps that use tents for housing should adhere to the same guidelines listed above. Additional guidance for wilderness trips is provided below.

## Considerations for indoor air

COVID-19 spreads through tiny droplets that form in the air when someone coughs, talks, sings or laughs. This risk is higher in indoor spaces. To reduce risk of COVID-19 in indoor spaces, follow guidelines for masking, social distancing, hand hygiene and surface disinfection, and:

- Open windows and outer doors when weather and safety permits
- Limit the number of people in a space to allow at least 50 square feet per person
- Use portable fans with caution. If used, position to pull air out of the room.
- Consider using a portable air cleaner or air purifier with a HEPA filter
- Work with an HVAC professional to evaluate building systems, ventilation, filtration, and air cleaning

See [Indoor Air Consideration: COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/indoorair.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/indoorair.html) for more information.

## Shared bathrooms

- Ensure routine cleaning and disinfecting of bathrooms.
- Create showering schedules that limit the number of people using the showers at one time.
- Encourage campers and staff to bring their own toiletries from home to avoid using shared supplies.
- Post signs encouraging campers and staff to properly wash their hands.
  - [Why Hand Hygiene is Important and When to Wash Your Hands \(www.health.state.mn.us/people/handhygiene/why/index.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/handhygiene/why/index.html).
  - [CDC Handwashing: Health Promotion Materials \(www.cdc.gov/handwashing/materials.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/materials.html).

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## Recommendations for activities

These steps will help minimize transmission and allow for swift contact tracing if needed.

- Follow these activity guidelines to maintain safe practices while congregating indoors: [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth and Student Programs \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf).
- Adhere to the rule of limiting groups to 10 people or fewer. If social distancing cannot be attained with the group size, then the number of participants must be reduced.
- Whenever possible, implement programming that refrains from intermixing groups (keep campers in consistent pods). If intermixing groups is necessary (e.g., sheltering indoors together due to severe weather), limit the number of groups that intermix and keep records of staff and campers.

## Shared equipment

- Do not share equipment whenever possible.
  - If shared, ensure campers thoroughly wash hands afterwards.
  - For example, consider designating paddles or tennis rackets to campers at the beginning of the session, or asking families to send them with campers from home whenever feasible.
- Clean high-touch surfaces of equipment between uses.

## Swimming

- Follow capacity and gathering limits at beaches and pools.
- Maintain physical distancing of 6 feet while swimming or playing in a beachfront area.
- Do not wear face coverings while swimming.
- Follow guidance on [Reopening of Public Swimming Pool and Aquatic Facilities \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/poolreopen.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/poolreopen.pdf).

## Music activities

- Be mindful that there is evidence that COVID-19 has rapidly spread among groups of people singing together in indoor environments.
  - Learn more at [CDC: High SARS-CoV-2 Attack Rate Following Exposure at a Choir Practice — Skagit County, Washington, March 2020 \(www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6919e6.htm\)](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6919e6.htm).
- Consider not holding singing sessions or practices or performances that involve wind instruments. If practices or performances still must occur, follow the guidance in Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19 ([www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf)).

## Sports

- Limit sports activities to groups of a maximum number of 10 people for indoor activities, and up to 25 people per group for outdoor activities. Do not have intermixing between groups.
- Consider whether the sport can be modified to minimize contact among players.
  - For example, kick or throw balls back and forth, but discourage tackling or stealing the ball where contact between players may occur.

- Follow [COVID-19 Sports Guidance for Youth and Adults](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.pdf) ([www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.pdf](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.pdf)).

## Horseback riding

- Maintain the same social distancing best practices as with other activities. When outdoors, staff and campers should wear face coverings when social distancing is not possible to maintain.
- Ride outdoors whenever possible.
- Encourage campers and staff to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer immediately before and after horseback riding.
- Clean reins, saddles, and other shared equipment between uses if possible.

## Wilderness trips

Travel in wilderness areas requires additional precautions to ensure a safe experience for everyone. Camps should consult with their boards and medical advisors while weighing the risks of implementing programming during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Unnecessary travel outside of Minnesota is discouraged at this time. However, adhere to local travel restrictions when considering travel to other areas. See [CDC: Travel](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html) ([www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html)).
- Camps where core programming is not focused on wilderness trips should cancel trips to areas off camp property that require interaction with the public.
- Camps with core programming focused on wilderness trips located off camp property should implement COVID-19 transmission and mitigation strategies before and during camp sessions to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Fourteen days before arriving at a wilderness camp, staff and campers should limit their activities and maintain physical distancing from others.
- Consider asking staff and campers to do daily health checks for 14 days leading up to camp.
- Consider asking staff and campers to get tested for COVID-19 prior to departing for a wilderness trip camp. Anticipate that it may take several days to receive test results.
  - A negative COVID-19 test at one point in time does not mean a person will stay negative. A negative test result does not replace the need to wear face coverings, continue frequent handwashing, avoid touching the face, and practice social distancing. These are our best tools to help prevent the spread of illness.
- Once campers and staff arrive at camp, separate groups to prevent intermixing before traveling to wilderness areas.
- When traveling in wilderness areas, have a tent available for each person, if possible, or multiple tents per group, where campers sleep head-to-toe.
- Do not wear face coverings while sleeping.
- Continue to implement daily health checks while on wilderness trips.

- Have evacuation plans in place, including information about how to evacuate the group should anyone develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19. This should include communication plans with local officials who may assist with the evacuation.
- Ensure that first aid kits include face coverings.

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## Recommendations for travel

Consistent with state and federal guidance to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to protect our neighbors, Minnesotans are discouraged from unnecessary travel. If travel is necessary to engage in authorized outdoor recreation like camps, the following will help you minimize potential points of virus transmission:

- Travel as directly as possible to your destination, minimizing stops along the way.
- Bring all needed supplies with you.
- If you do need to stop for gas or supplies, wear a face covering.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after touching common surfaces (e.g., gas pumps, door handles, shared bathrooms, etc.).
- Do not travel if sick.

MDH strongly recommends limiting participation in summer programming to campers and staff who live in Minnesota or bordering states.

- Camps that are accepting campers or staff from geographic regions outside of Minnesota and bordering states should communicate that information to families.
- Parents must have a plan in place with the camp if their child becomes ill and needs to be sent home.
- Ask staff to limit their interaction with local communities when off-site to obtain only essential services, allowing interaction only sparingly, or find other ways to get supplies/services. Follow appropriate social distancing and health etiquette measures when interacting with the community.
- Remind staff to limit their interactions with others on their time off and to maintain social distancing.

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## Recommendations for transportation

These steps will help minimize transmission and allow for swift contact tracing if needed:

- Encourage families to transport their children to camp in private vehicles whenever feasible.
- Reduce the number of staff and campers on individual transportation buses or vans to allow people to spread out. Consider using visual cues to illustrate where campers may sit to adhere to social distancing. Siblings may sit together in the same seat.

- Drivers should adhere to the following CDC guidelines: [What Rideshare, Taxi, Limo, and other Passenger Drivers-for-Hire Need to Know about COVID-19 \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/rideshare-drivers-for-hire.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/rideshare-drivers-for-hire.html).

Keep interactions with the public to a minimum when traveling to and from camps. Refer to the travel section above for more guidance on traveling to and from camp.

## Screening at the bus

- Screen staff and campers before boarding vans or buses, or require parents and staff to perform screenings at home in the morning before boarding transportation vehicles.
- Follow the CDC screening process for children: [Examples of Screening Methods \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#ScreenChildren\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#ScreenChildren).
- Screening should include asking if anyone in their household has symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
  - Staff or campers with household members who are sick with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 are not allowed to attend camp for 14 days from their last exposure with that person.
- Consider using a system similar to this [Visitor and Employee Health Screening Checklist \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf).

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# Recommendations to support a safe and healthy camp environment

## Promote social norms and etiquette

- Follow social norms and health etiquette guidance in [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth and Student Programs \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf).
  - Consider using the American Camp Association’s [Suggested Camp Supplies and Materials for 2020 Camp Season \(www.acacamps.org/sites/default/files/resource\\_library/operations-guide/ehe-suggested-camp-supplies.pdf\)](https://www.acacamps.org/sites/default/files/resource_library/operations-guide/ehe-suggested-camp-supplies.pdf).
- Set expectations that face coverings will be worn by campers and staff while at camp.
  - Suggest that campers bring several face coverings with them to camp. The camp can consider keeping a supply in case they are needed.
  - Train and set expectations for staff to model wearing a face covering and healthy hand washing hygiene within the camp community.
- Educate campers and staff about the importance of maintaining physical distancing of 6 feet at all times, including while staff are socializing with others on their time off.
- Engage campers and staff in developing communications or creative strategies to limit the spread of COVID-19 (e.g., develop a competition around creating the new camp greeting to replace hugs or high-fives).

## Lessen the risk of unintentional spread in surrounding communities

- Limit camp activities to the campgrounds.
- Discourage adult staff from leaving the campgrounds.
- Purchase necessary supplies before the campers arrive. Consider making common items available for purchase on the campgrounds.

## Conduct daily health checks

- Work with in-house health staff to implement daily screening, including temperature checks and screening for new symptoms.
  - Consider asking parents to send a digital thermometer to camp with their child so they can take their own temperature each morning.
- Refer to the “Promote health checks” section in [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth and Student Programs \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf).
  - Ensure all staff have proper training on recognizing symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19.
  - Regularly look for updated guidance on symptoms of COVID-19 at [CDC: Symptoms of Coronavirus \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html).

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## Resources

- [American Camp Association: Field Guide for Camps \(www.acacamps.org/resource-library/coronavirus/camp-business/camp-operations-guide-summer-2020\)](http://www.acacamps.org/resource-library/coronavirus/camp-business/camp-operations-guide-summer-2020)
- [CDC: Suggestions for Youth and Summer Camps \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html)



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